

Today's News - Tuesday, June 19, 2012

- We lose a master Edinburgh-based architect and lighting designer.
- Hawthorne reports it's official - Gruen/Grimshaw team to take on L.A.'s Union Station master plan: "Their 2050 scheme was among the most fanciful of the bunch."
- News from Down Under: Melbourne launches major initiatives to manage growth, including six new suburbs: "planners have admitted action has to be taken now to avoid the overall structural meltdown that occurs in excessively dense cities."
- At least now Australians will have the GBCA's Green Star - Communities rating system as a tool to "lift the bar for developments nationally."
- A study of Auckland's inner-city apartment dwellers finds that only 25% "feel they belong to a recognizable 'community'"; the results will be used "to develop ways to strengthen people's links with one another."
- Hume x 2: the Ideacity conference in Toronto ended Friday "expecting the worst but hoping for the best" (he seems not so optimistic).
- He's only somewhat cheered by a Toronto parking lot winning an IPI Award of Excellence: "Whatever beauty and drama the arch possesses is pretty well lost in the asphalt banality of the site."
- Q&A with Mike Lydon re: tactical urbanism, offering quick, affordable tools for making a big impact (perhaps he should head to Toronto?).
- Q&A with Olin re: landscape urbanism, the state of public space, and his new L.A. office: urban design is "an activity that lots of disciplines do together. It's ensemble work. It's one of the things we do when we play together well."
- NYC's Parks Commissioner Benepe heading to the Trust for Public Land to take on park and playground development across the country (the city will miss him - and we're big fans - but good news for the country!).
- An engaging history of zoning codes, "or, how Americans learned to legislate our NIMBY impulses."
- A Melton essay we missed last year that is well worth the read re: beauty and buildings: "When the Modernists declared that form follows function, did they really intend for the built environment to look so ... dreary?" (with a dollop of "beauty and biophilia").
- Q&A with "The Reluctant Architect" author Keith Anderson: "Architects have become so enamored with the phrase 'form follows function' that discussions of beauty have all but been thrown out."
- A fairly starchitect-laden shortlist to design one of the world's largest research facilities in Sweden.
- A look at two pavilions at Expo 2012 in South Korea: one "stands out as one of the most technologically advanced, if aesthetically underwhelming," while the other "tests architectural and engineering limits in a different way - by being as low-tech as possible."
- More on MASS Design Group's efforts to improve healthcare delivery in Rwanda, Uganda, Haiti, and home.
- Crosbie found some rude awakenings on a pilgrimage to Chichen Itza, "one of the places on my architect's bucket list...our spirits ready to be lifted and someone is trying to sell us gee-gaws."
- "20 Odd Questions" for Piero Lissoni, the "high-output, low-profile Italian designer."

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Obituary: Jonathan Speirs (1958-2012), Edinburgh architect and lighting designer -- Speirs + Major; Roger Stirk Harbour; Wilkinson Eyre; Jean Nouvel; Foster & Partners- BD/Building Design (UK)

Gruen, Grimshaw tapped for Union Station master plan: ...the vision boards were only distantly connected to Metro's decision-making process...and the choice...seems to underscore that. Their 2050 scheme was among the most fanciful of the bunch... By Christopher Hawthorne- Los Angeles Times

How Melbourne Plans to Manage Population Growth: Major initiatives...include Growth Corridor Plans and the urban development of six new suburbs...that is sustainable...with an overall avoidance of unnecessary urban sprawl....planners have admitted action has to be taken now to avoid...the overall structural meltdown that occurs in excessively dense cities. - DesignBuild Source (Australia)

Green Star – Communities Rating System Released: ...a national rating tool, which is being lauded as the standard that will 'transform Australia's cities and communities'...it will lift the bar for developments nationally. -- Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA)- DesignBuild Source (Australia)

Inner-city locals find it hard to feel at home: A pioneering study of Auckland's inner-city apartment dwellers has found that only a quarter feel they belong to a recognisable "community"...Parnell Trust...plans to use the report to develop ways to strengthen people's links with one another. - New Zealand Herald

Despite the bleak message, Ideacity conference ends on note of optimism: ...ended Friday expecting the worst but hoping for the best...a subtext...is about just how badly Toronto and Canada are slipping. From transit to climate change, we have not kept up with our own goals let alone our needs. By Christopher Hume -- Taras Grescoe- Toronto Star

Toronto parking lot wins international award: ...received an Award of Excellence from the International Parking Institute [IPI]...The Zhong Hua Men Archway...is the only thing separating [it] from every other nondescript parking lot in the city...Whatever beauty and drama the arch possesses is pretty well lost in the asphalt banality of the site. By Christopher Hume -- Louis K.C. Cheung Architect [image]- Toronto Star

Talking Tactical Urbanism: As interest in urban planning surges across the country, Mike Lydon discusses the small changes that make a big difference...offering quick, affordable tools for making a big impact. -- Street Plans Collaborative; Build a Better Block; Open Streets Project [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Q+A> Laurie Olin: Noted landscape architect discusses his ASLA Gold Medal, his training as an architect, and his thoughts about landscape urbanism and the state of public space..."urban design isn't a discipline, it's an activity that lots of disciplines do together. It's ensemble work...It's one of the things we do when we play together well." By Sam Lubell- The Architect's Newspaper

Adrian Benepe Joins The Trust for Public Land as Urban Programs Director: New York City's Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for the past decade, will become Senior Vice President of City Park Development at the leading conservation organization for creating parks and playgrounds in cities across America. - Trust for Public Land

The Birth of Zoning Codes, a History: Or, how Americans learned to legislate our NIMBY impulses. [images, links]- The Atlantic Cities

Beauty in Buildings: What's the Use? When the Modernists declared that form follows function, did they really intend for the built environment to look so ... dreary? Maybe beauty is an essential building function - not just something for the interior designer to work out at the end. By Paula Melton -- Amelia Amon/Alt.Technica; Christopher Alexander; Peter Eisenman- BuildingGreen.com

Q&A with "The Reluctant Architect" author Keith Anderson: "[The] thesis is a refusal to embrace the current approach to market-driven architecture, which merely adds square footage to an already overcrowded planet...Architects have become so enamored with the phrase "form follows function" that discussions of beauty have all but been thrown out." -- KA Architecture- Distinctly Montana

Foster + Partners, HOK and BIG shortlisted for European research hub: ...one of the world's largest research facilities...a European Spallation Source (ESS) materials research centre to be built in southern Sweden. -- Bethem Crouwel/West 8/Arup/Mandaworks; Bjarke Ingels Group/HOK/Topotek1/man made land; Foster + Partners/Peter Walker and Partners/Research Facilities Design/Ramboll Group/Berg/CF Moller Architects; Henning Larsen Architects/COBE/SLA/NNE Pharmaplan; Tengbom/Mecanoo Architecten/Buro Happold- BD/Building Design (UK)

Adventures in architecture at Expo 2012, Yeosu, South Korea: An unassuming town...is an unlikely place for one of the world's most advanced buildings...Korea pavilion...stands out as one of the most technologically advanced, if aesthetically underwhelming, of them all...Theme Pavilion...tests architectural and engineering limits in a different way...by being as low-tech as possible. -- Samoo Architects & Engineers; Soma Architects [images]- CNN

The architects of a new kind of health care: MASS Design Group aims to improve care delivery from Rwanda to Uganda to Haiti to back home. -- Paul Farmer/Partners in Health; Model of Architecture Serving Society- Boston Globe

Pilgrim's Progress: ...on a pilgrimage to the ruins of Chichen Itza, Mexico, one of the places on my architect's bucket list...And then it all went…terribly wrong...there was another vendor, and another, and another...But I still hadn't seen a blasted ruin! We arrive at pivotal sacred sites around the world, our spirits ready to be lifted...and someone is trying to sell us gee-gaws. By Michael J. Crosbie- Faith & Form Magazine

20 Odd Questions: Piero Lissoni, the Quiet Italian: With major U.S. projects in the works, the high-output, low-profile designer talks Shaker chairs, Porsches and the best food in Milan..."for me New York feels like the most "European" city in the world. It's this incredible salad of cultures." - Wall Street Journal



Raimund Abraham: The Musician's House, Museum Insel Hombroich, Rhein County Neuss, Germany

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